

## **i never really cared (until i met you) by hopphorn**

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**Summary:**

Billy watches, and eventually Steve notices.

## i never really cared (until i met you)

It's January fifteenth and Jessica Martin has been swarming Steve all night, sipping out of his beer and sitting in his lap. Billy's been only sort of looking and only when no one would notice him casting a glance across the party to find them. To watch the girl in Steve's lap laugh and cover her face with her hands. She's a coy little thing Jessica, and Billy hates her.

But when he looks over, sees Steve press a kiss to her mouth, Billy doesn't feel much of anything.

It's silly, how he'd gone so long without ever seeing Steve Harrington kiss. He's seen the guy *naked*, and he didn't think that there was anything better than that. But there was, there *is*. There's the way Steve palms Jessica's neck, tilts her head just right so their lips can open and the kiss can deepen.

It's worse than the fresh bruise in Billy's right ribs. It's better than getting a glimpse of Steve in the showers.

He falters, just long enough for someone to bump into him and part of his beer sloshes out of the cup and onto his shirt. The beer is warm, despite the snow on the ground outside, but he jumps and hisses something at the kid responsible. It's a good distraction, really, the wet stain on his chest. It gives him an excuse to put his fist in some idiot's face.

It's February and Becky Johnson dumps three roses on Billy's desk, giggles when he winks at her and wishes her a Happy Valentine's Day. When she stumbles into Steve's desk, she recovers and digs four roses out of her little bag, hands them over with a blush.

Steve gets the most of anyone in the room.

But he also gets a kiss. It's small, barely a peck, but for a moment the

guy's face goes soft and his mouth presses back.

And Billy doesn't join in when the room breaks out into applause.

It's March and Billy's drunk. Not the fun kind either. He's drunk from a bottle of whiskey he bribed out of the guy running the corner store. He's eighteen in a few weeks anyway. It's not like anyone gives a damn about him either.

So he's drunk in a junk yard somewhere, kicking at an old bicycle and throwing anything glass he can find because he feels like his skin is too small. He doesn't *fit* anymore. The word *trapped* circles in his head like water down a drain and he's spiraling. It's only a matter of time before he hurts himself or someone else trying to feel anything besides helpless. Anything but miserable and trapped.

He gets so hammered he takes one bad step, winds up haphazardly falling to the ground. It's soggy out, and his ass is wet and cold in moments. If he were sober, he might sob.

“Hargrove?”

Steve's voice cutting through the cold is like Billy's worst nightmare come true, finding him there in the muck. Sad and sitting there alone.

“King Steve!” He calls out anyway, makes a show of it by laughing and tilting his bottle back for a swig. It doesn't even taste like much now, his tongue so numb from the burn. “Your majesty.”

Steve's wearing a nice winter jacket, but his cheeks are red from the winter chill that lingers, the tip of his nose almost purple. And Billy wants to tell him how cute he looks, even in the eerie blue light of the moon.

“It's below freezing out, what are you doing—”

“I've got whiskey to warm me up.” Billy announces, shows him the

nearly empty bottle. And Steve's eyes widen. Even from a distance, Billy can see the concern. And he *hates* it. "Oh but I'm being *rude*." He announces, shoving himself to his feet and nearly falling twice before he's upright. "Would you care for a drink, your highness? Perhaps a throne?" He gestures to a beige toilet, tossed atop a heap of trash.

Steve's eye roll is expected, but his laughter is not.

He chuckles, sniffs, and then lets out a cloud of white, warm breath.

"You're such an asshole."

Billy grins and swigs more whiskey, barely feels it in his throat when he swallows.

It's April and Rodney Curtis has a bug up his ass and Billy's had *enough*. After writing off one hard bump in the hallway as an accident, Billy pins him to a locker for the second.

The pimply redhead doesn't even bat an eyelash. Like he's not aware that Billy cracks heads for fun nowadays.

"Get off me, faggot." Curtis snarls before Billy can even get a punch in. Before he can even ask the obligatory *what the fuck's your problem*. And then suddenly the whole hallway is watching and Billy feels the earth shift under his feet.

"What did you call me?" He growls, pulling the kid off the floor until his sneakers dangle. And *yeah* suddenly the fear he expects, the fear he *needs*, is back on the kid's face. Where it belongs.

"Billy." Steve's hand is on his shoulder, his voice in his ear. "Rodney, what the hell? You looking to have the shit kicked out of you?"

"He's a fag." Rodney says, eyes still locked on Billy's seething face. "Heather Thompson said they made out for almost a half hour and his dick wasn't even hard."

And Billy feels the hall closing in around him.

“Heather Thompson is a shitty kisser and a dumb *slut*.” Billy hisses. “Fact is, I can cave your head in, Curtis. And I will—”

“So why don’t you get lost before he does?” Steve interrupts, clapping his hand on Billy’s arm like he *controls* him. But it’s weird. The touch roots him. Makes him able to lower Rodney to the floor and shove him away.

It’s May and they graduate in less than a month and Billy’s been living out of his car for a week. He’s been good at hiding the fact that he’s been showering at school and washing his clothes at the laundromat in town. He’s escaped all notice entirely.

Except Steve’s.

He catches him one morning, rolling out of his car, sore and stiff from sleeping on a small backseat. And for a moment, Billy thinks he’ll have to threaten him. He’ll have to bribe him into not *telling*, but then he sees the cup of coffee in Steve’s hand. Sees the McDonald’s bag in the other.

“Hungry?”

And he probably looks like hell, still wearing his clothes from the day before. And his hair is flat, definitely a mess around his head. But Steve is smiling at him, friendly like they’re pals.

Billy just wants to disappear.

“Max told me.” Steve follows up, holding the foam cup out further. “Last night when I had to drive her home from the arcade. If I had known, I would have...” He shrugs, like maybe what he had to offer wasn’t worth mentioning.

“Swooped in on a white horse?” Billy takes the coffee, savors the smell of dark roast. He doesn’t miss the way Steve’s face lights up a

little and he *laughs*. A sound Billy needs more than hot coffee.

“You calling me your white knight?” He asks.

The blush that fills Billy’s cheeks is all too telling and he clears his throat, takes a long pull of scalding coffee. Steve’s clever eyes track him, watch him burn the shit out of his tongue in favor of covering up his shame. “I wouldn’t mind.” The guy eventually murmurs, stepping closer until Billy can see the flecks of gold in his eyes. “I could be your white knight, if you wanted.”

“Yeah?” He has nothing more *intelligent* to say, not when his mouth is pulsing with pain and his heart is booming in his chest. Not when Steve steps into him, *against* him, to cup his jaw with one hand.

“Yeah.” Steve replies.